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NECROLOGY

FRANK L. JAMES, Ph. D., M. D.

Dr. Frank L. James, past president of the American Microscopical Society and for eighteen years editor of the scientific departments of the *National Druggist*, of St. Louis, Mo., died in that city May 19, 1907. He was taken sick May 5, grew steadily worse, and erysipelas developed in its most violent form. It is supposed the infection took place from a sore caused by the friction of a celluloid shield worn over a defective eye, the result of an accident about ten years before.

Dr. James was a man of varied and unusual attainments and had quite an eventful career. He was born in Mobile, Alabama, August 27, 1841. A New England ancestry was back of him, on his mother's side; paternally, he came of English yeoman stock, which settled in the "tidewater" country of Virginia in early Colonial days. His was a rare intellect, and his facility in the acquirement of languages was little short of marvelous. There is hardly a language that has a literature with which he was not more or less familiar, and most of them he could read and translate with ease. At sixteen he was prepared to enter the Polytechnique at Carlsruhe, Germany, whither he was sent to study civil engineering. His passion, however, was for chemistry, and by rare good fortune, at eighteen, he became a member of the household and a worker in the laboratory of Baron Justus von Liebig.

Leaving the companionship of Liebig, he graduated in medicine in Paris, just as the coming on of the Civil War sent young Americans home to espouse one side or the other. Dr. James' sympathies, naturally, were with the people of his native section, and he determined to come back to his native country, and to throw his fortunes with the Southern side. The passing of the Federal lines presented a difficulty, since the blockade had already been established, but his wit brought him through. A fluent speaker of German and somewhat of German physique, he made his way under



the guise of a military officer to Havre, where friends procured him a passport. Before leaving Paris, he had received from Confederate Commissioner Slidell dispatches for President Davis. Passing over to London, he undertook the same commission from Mr. Mason. A few days found him in New York, "a German interested in the war between the States." There he met an old friend, a former business partner of his father, who supplied him with \$250 in gold. He went to Washington, and thence, by invitation, to Alexandria, where he was the guest of Federal officers. All the while, the dispatches were concealed in the holsters of the pistols he carried. He then gradually made his way toward the Confederate lines, and, finally managing safely to slip into them, was soon with his family in Mobile. The dispatches were in due time delivered to President Davis, who, becoming acquainted with Dr. James' thorough knowledge of European languages, and being impressed with his youthful daring and discretion, appointed him to a place in the secret service. Here his technical knowledge and skill found use in the making of the first torpedoes used in the memorable struggle. He was personally engaged in planting the explosives in Mobile Bay which blew up a Federal war vessel and caused the loss of many lives. As a secret service man he was at one time directing the catching and salting of fish for the army, using opportunities thus afforded him for communicating with the outside.

The war over, he went into the temporary retirement of country life on a farm in Mississippi, where his sister, Mrs. Mosby, had her home.

In 1866 he became connected with the topographical survey of the Mississippi River under Col. Folsom. While thus engaged he became so much interested in the Indian mounds in Osceola county, Arkansas, that he began and conducted a systematic exploration of them, the results of which are recorded in the records of the Smithsonian Institution. In the early seventies, he was conspicuous in reconstruction history as associate editor of the *Memphis Appeal*, but gave up journalism in 1877 to enter on the practice of medicine in St. Louis. A born writer, however, he continued to make frequent contributions to the secular as well as to the scientific press, and in May, 1884, he was selected as editor of the

therapeutic department of the *National Druggist*. He assumed the editorial management at the beginning of 1888, and from that time until his death, with only a brief interval, he held this position.

Possessed of a many-sided genius, his life abounded in contradictions. Capable of tender affection, he never married; profoundly learned in medicine, he was personally careless of many conditions physicians insist upon; a fluent and graceful writer, he had no ambition for publication, his only published work, so far as is known, outside of his contributions to journalism, being a manual for students, entitled "Elementary Microscopical Technology." With an intellect of great breadth, he was content to shut himself in; with vast acquirements in fields that have made other men famous, he pursued the even tenor of his way; lavish in the expenditure for books, he spent little otherwise.

As age advanced, his friends and associates gradually grew fewer and fewer, and his last days were days of loneliness and solitude. But in his library he always found solace and entertainment, and his books were to the last his closest and dearest friends.

Dr. James was a skillful microscopist, and his researches with this instrument were to have been given in full to the scientific world when the accident already referred to deprived him of the sight of one eye, and defeated his cherished purpose. He was an inventor and maker of both chemical and microscopical appliances for his own use, and, until the last, maintained his great skill in the handling of tools. It was characteristic of him that he never took out a patent, though there were many evidences of his handiwork stored in his laboratory.

Dr. James became a member of this Society in 1882 and served once as president, presiding at the Washington meeting in 1891, and though in latter years compelled to forego the pleasures which the microscope afforded him, he never lost interest in the Society.